

NEWSRELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday July 11, 2008

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Corrections seeks proposals for two new community-based programs

The Montana Department of Corrections will request separate proposals in late July and early August for development of a prerelease center in the Kalispell area and a sex offender treatment facility.

The request for proposals for 40-bed prerelease center for males will be issued July 28. The request for proposals for a 116-bed sex-offender treatment program will be released Aug. 8. Both projects were authorized by the 2007 Legislature.

The sex offender program request will solicit offers to site, construct and operate a facility designed to provide about a year of intensive treatment for lower-risk sex offenders. The goal of the program will be to expand treatment opportunities for more incarcerated sex offenders so they are returned to the community safely.

The development of a secure residential sex offender treatment facility will assist the Department of Corrections in managing and treating a growing portion of the correctional population. About one out of every three inmates in Montana State Prison due to a sexual offense, and the waiting list for treatment is long. To address this situation, the 2007 Legislature, through Senate Bill 547, authorized the department to contract with a private Montana corporation to establish and maintain a sex offender treatment program outside of prison.

The department expects the program to start operating in spring 2009.

“These offenders eventually return to the community anyway and this project recognizes that greater opportunity for treatment increases the likelihood that the returns will be safer,” said Rick Alan Deady, treatment contract program manager for the department. “Research indicates that specialized treatment dramatically reduces recidivism among sex offenders by ensuring that sex offenders develop the skills and knowledge that will reduce their likelihood of re-offending and increase their potential to lead productive law-abiding lives.”

In addition, the creation of a treatment program outside of prison will afford higher-risk sex offenders still in prison more timely access to treatment, Deady said.

The prerelease center planned for Northwest Montana would begin operating sometime next spring. The project will be the first such facility in the region, a reflection of the effect that the area has on the corrections system. Flathead County is the fourth largest contributor of offenders under department supervision and accounts for about 160 offenders a year in the six existing centers in other regions of the state.

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Currently the Department of Corrections has contracts with five Montana non-profit organizations to operate six prerelease facilities located in Billings, Butte, Bozeman, Helena, Great Falls and Missoula. The centers combine for 800 beds and offenders usually stay for about six months, providing annual capacity of about 1,600 offenders.

This project allows the department to accommodate an expanding offender population by serving offenders who are likely to return to the Flathead area and need assistance in establishing employment, treatment and residence.

“Many of these offenders are eventually coming home, so the question becomes what is the smartest way to do that,” said Kerry Pribnow, prerelease contracts manager for the department. “We establish these facilities to offer treatment, guidance, financial discipline, education and job opportunities and residence transition. We believe prereleases are one of the best correctional tools we have to improve the safety of our communities.”

Pam Bunke, Adult Community Corrections Division administrator, said the additional programs further the department’s philosophy of managing offenders in the most effective and appropriate settings possible without sacrificing public safety.

“We are excited about both of these programs and believe that they are integral in supporting community correction’s goal of providing the necessary treatment and support to ensure safer communities and better results for offenders trying to rebuild their lives,” she said.

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